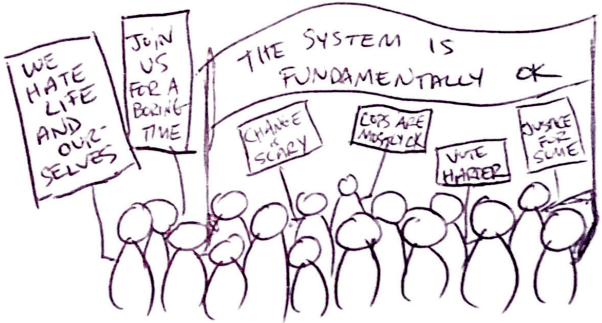
[heyhey, hehe, the]

TOP 5 WORST PROTEST CHANTS

[have got to go!]

as voted on by same haters

2026


WE HATE LIFE AND OUR-SELVES
JOIN US FOR A BORING TIME
THE SYSTEM IS FUNDAMENTALLY OK
CHANGE IS SCARY
COPS ARE MOSTLY OK
VOTE HARDER
JUSTICE FOR SOME

I am a hater. A complainer.

Nonetheless, all my friends and I go to protests (and occasionally even organize them) because we want to see a better world. But, we often do so begrudgingly, as far too many protests consist mainly of yelling at clouds with little to no chance of significantly impacting anyone or anything. This does not have to be this way. So here we are, a-hatin'.

One of my recurring bits/topics of conversation is to ask people about the WORST protest chants. You will find 5 of these WORST chants on the pages of this zine. It's an easy conversation topic because alas, these chants are quite common. There are a lot of bad protest chants. There are a lot of cringe protest chants.

Speaking as a white millennial midwesterner, my people seem to be naturally disinclined towards chanting. Very few of us are willing to ring someone's doorbell or talk on the phone, much less yell when strangers are present. Bad and cringe protest chants only exacerbate this problem: "***You want me to yell.... and to sound even MORE stupid than I already think I do?"***

That said, chants can be useful, and a protest without any hootin' and hollerin' is usually a real letdown. So sometimes I find myself The Chant Leader. I do think yelling in public is fun, but otherwise I hate this role. It attracts too much attention to me personally, and my throat hurts the next day. But sometimes nobody else will do it, and..... if I'm The Chant Leader, I get to lead chants that don't suck!

SO WHAT MAKES A CHANT THAT DOESN'T SUCK, THEN?

Yes, chants help to engage the crowd and break awkward silences. But this is also true of chants at a sportsball game. Let's look at some of the reasons for chants at protests:

- To act as an advertisement to inform people what's going on. "***Honey, what is that crowd doing?" "Sounds like Netanyahu's committing genocide again, babe."*** And when the chants get into media reports or videos, they can lend a sense of solidarity to people elsewhere. "***From Omaha to Gaza! Long live the Intifada!"***

- Help broadcast a group's intentions to an external target. A group of workers showing up at the bosses' house with the call-and-response chant "***You take one of us on? You take ALL of us on!"*** immediately shows the boss he's gonna have a bigger fight on his hands if he doesn't fix the problem.

- Communicate an action in the moment, internally to the rest of the crowd. "***Out of the sidewalk, and into the street!"*** is a good one for pushing past timid organizers who value non-confrontation over disrupting business as usual. The best example I've seen of chanting for the moment has been a line of people with shields, marching towards a line of police, chanting "***Move Back!"*** just like riot cops like to do. Sometimes the cops are so shocked they actually do move back.

- Finally, OK, I'll admit it's fair to say that a good protest chant is fun, energizing, entertaining, and makes the people chanting it feel good. It should rally the troops, not leave us bored. All the chants to follow are so overused they are boring as fuck. These are not good chants, and as such, they don't really serve the above purposes, either.

BELOW ARE THE TOP 5 WORST PROTEST CHANTS, AS VOTED ON BY US HATERS.

"HEY HEY, HO, HO, <SO-AND-SO> HAS GOT TO GO"

Hate to break it to ya, but "so-and so" who has got to go, is just gonna be replaced with another schmuck who, in fact, has got to go too. The cycle continues and you will be able to holler this chant ad infinitum, and pass it on to your grandkids and their grandkids, to also holler at schmucks who have got to go. Is simply hollering the whole point of the exercise???

One of the biggest problems with shitty chants is simply that they ***reveal a theory of change that does not make logical sense*** and expose the chanters' naivete. OK, sure, on the surface, we can agree that Donald Trump has got to go. Who the hell is gonna replace him, someone approximately as evil but slightly less demented or more likeable? Do we really want that?

Furthermore, such a chant (**and any chant like "Vote Them Out" or otherwise about voting**) simply ***upholds the legitimacy of a system that has failed to bring fundamental change*** every 2, 4 and 6 years since your grandpaw was chanting at schmucks. ["Oh great, we voted them out!" *Four years later* "You're telling me they're back in again?!"] We can do better than this, folks. Leave the vote-stanning and election-erections to the political parties and polling places.

Also, the Hey-Hey-Ho-Ho chant is like, the first chant every toddler learns. It's overused. It's tired. It needs end-of-life palliative care. Be more creative. Ya schmucks.

"When <bla bla bla> is under attack, what do we do? Stand up fight back"

Chants that ***over-promise and engage in hyperbole*** risk doing more harm than good. This chant may help install a sense of solidarity in some, emphasizing that we are collectively resisting. But *how* are we fighting back, exactly? Because right now, at the time of this chant, it looks like we're walking in a circle on the sidewalk around the empty state capitol building, or waving signs on an overpass that nobody down below can read anyway. Is this fighting back? Is fighting back in the room right now??

Sometimes this chant cycles through multitudes of various people and things under attack (Women's Rights! Education! Health Care! Trans Rights! Immigrants! Voting Rights! Voting Lefts!) and goddamn, suddenly that's a lot more fighting back than we might've bargained for. We already knew it's all under attack anyway. Are we fighting back by making lists???

Related: "**If we don't get it? Shut it down!"** Let's get real for a sec, are you REALLY gonna shut it down though? Because if you chant this, you need to actually have the interest, willingness, and capacity to shut it (whatever IT is) down. And chances are high that you're not gonna get IT! Then, if you don't shut

IT down, nobody's gonna take you seriously the next time IT happens, and you don't get THAT either!

Back in 2020 in Minneapolis, after the burning of the 3rd precinct, this chant (sometimes modified with "Burn it down!") posed a real threat to power, because we had just stood on business. We got IT, albeit briefly. After a while it became more and more unlikely anything would burn down in the immediate future. A while after that it also became more and more unlikely we would shut down anything, either. The chant persisted. IT didn't get shut down, we didn't get IT any more, and we haven't gotten IT for quite a while now.

Instead of declaring we are declaring we are fighting back or promising shutting IT down, follow the good advice of *underpromising* and *overdelivering*. It keeps our enemies on their toes, and makes it more likely we will get IT.

"Money for jobs and education, not for <War and occupation, or something else rhyming>"

Like, sure, that's a reasonable reform I guess. Money for education and not war would be a good thing. Jobs, on the other hand, let's talk about that. Who wants more jobs??? Most people only want a job if they want more money, and we [billionaires excluded] only want more money if we want a better quality of life (but that's too long for a chant). "Money for weed and education," now that would be a better chant. (But also some

people have had terrible experiences in the imperial education system, and let's not discount that either!)

The biggest problem with this chant though is that it's ***another implicit endorsement of capitalism and the current system*** where a bunch of epstein-class elite fucks decide where to spend money that could feed, clothe and house the entire world many times over. And this gets to why protests often feel icky to me and lots of my friends - why are we out here begging for scraps?!? Why are we letting them decide in the first place?? Lets TAKE what we need, goddamit! They've stolen from us since 1492!! Class War and Expropriation, Not Genocide and Occupation!

"Whose streets? Our streets"

This chant is almost always guilty of ***mis-use and dishonesty***. YO, we took over the streets and established an autonomous zone?? Fuck yeah, reasonable time to use the chant. We're parading around in one lane, or even on the sidewalk, and some organizers in yellow peace-police vests are squawkin' at people to stay in line because gosh, they really don't want the police to show up?? Then don't use the damn chant. It's not your street—your behavior is clearly opposite to the words coming out of your mouth!!

Did the cops block off the road themselves so you could do your thing? Then they can just as easily order you all to go away—and you would obey them? Then no, it's not Our Streets, in this case,

its Their Streets. Is it 3pm on Sunday and nobody's downtown whatsoever? OK sure, in that case, it's "your streets," at least temporarily, by virtue of Nobody Cares Anyway. Have fun.

Related: "**Peaceful protest" / "Hands up, don't shoot"**. Not only is it nearly always ***mis-used*** these days, it's also ***dishonest to the point of putting people in danger by perpetuating the good/bad protester myth***. "Hands up don't shoot" came out of Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 where white cop Darren Wilson shot Black teenager Michael Brown, while Brown already had his hands up in surrender. At first, people chanted this to publicize what had happened and to expose white supremacist policing by showing that being compliant doesn't necessarily protect you, especially if you're Black. Reasonable. But later, even now over a decade later, people started chanting it with hands raised as a means of indicating the protest is staying "peaceful" (i.e.: compliant). I suppose this is slightly less humiliating to the chanters than straight up chanting "Peaceful protest," like some people often do when police snatch and arrest somebody.

Either way it's like, were you born yesterday????? Do you think the cops and politicians and epstein-class elites give a single turd about whether YOU think you're peaceful or not? They change the definition of "peaceful" all the time to suit their needs. Too uppity? VIOLENT. Too many people wearing masks? THAT'S NOT PEACEFUL. Dressing goth? DEFINITELY VIOLENT. You chanted about Palestine and we don't like it? TERRORIST, GO TO JAIL.

Whose ass are you protecting with this "we have to stay peeeaacceeefullll" crap, your own? Word, go vote or write a letter to your congresscritter then. Support your local taco joint (or don't. Brown people be congregating there - THAT'S VIOLENT!). But if you're into protecting ***~ all our asses, our collective asses ~*** then kill this colonizer mentality of acting based upon what our oppressors claim is peaceful or not, and let's get the job done no matter what they have to say about it.

"SHOW ME WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE / THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE"

This gets The Voters (me and my friends') top ranking for the #1 worst protest chant. It combines all the sins of those listed above: ***Poor theory of change. Overpromising. Dishonest. Endorsement and legitimation of the status quo.*** And even worse, it's blatantly self-congratulatory, bragging that the protest itself is the change, instead of one single tactic amongst many. As one Voter quipped, "It's copium of the worst sort!"

First, what exactly is it we think democracy looks like, anyway? Because this walk is getting really long and it's hot and I'm getting sunburned. We haven't even decided on anything together—the self-appointed leaders unilaterally declared which empty streets to parade down, and even then only after consulting with the cops! Now THAT's an autocracy if I ever saw

one. Secondly.... well, there's no easy way to say it, no cure except to rip off the band-aid: the myth of democracy as the most desirable form of organization needs to die.

Not only do we not have it, we also deserve better than it. We are NOT throwing our gluten free or vegan friends under the bus because the majority wants McDonalds. We are NOT submitting to the kingdom of the so-called "rule of law" just because sometimes there are laws that benefit us. And we do NOT accept the legitimacy of a bunch of demented rapist billionaire pedophile fuckboys whether or not they were "elected", "selected" or just well-connected.

On the other hand: maybe the type of protest where this chant is typically deployed IS, indeed, "what democracy looks like"—the act of aligning with our rulers in helping to bamboozle everyone else into thinking our individual actions alone can move mountains in the superstructures of power; that "anyone can become President", or that anyone can change the behavior of the elites with the right words or the right protest sign.

It's just not true.
And that makes "This is what democracy looks like"
the #1 Worst Protest Chant.

Honorable Mentions

- **What do we want? <Some Thing!> When do we want it? Now!** (Nobody ever seems to want the thing later??)
- "**The people united can never be defeated"**
  Really? Never? Is the problem this whole time just that we've not been united ***enough***? That's it? Why the fuck you lying? why you always lyin? Stop fuckin lyin!

Do you want better chants at your shit???

- Make a chant sheet to hand out at the beginning of the protest
- Check out the article "Don't Leave Chants to Chance" by Labor Notes
- Find the Booklet "Good Chants" (goodchants.org) and judge which are actually good, per your own criteria
- Commit to continual revolutionary study, practice, critique and improvement!

Top 5

Types of Chants

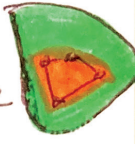
5 Gregorian Chants

4 Protest Chants

3 Tinker to Evers to Chance

2 Soccer Chants

1 Māori Haka Chant



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